

# SHREE RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHANS





*Saraswati Series*

# SRI RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA



*: Author :*

**Shri H. Parameshwar Hegde** M.Sc., M.A.



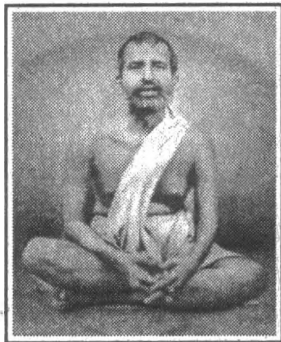
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01

# THE CHILDHOOD



A Brahmin couple called the Chattopadhyayas lived at Kamarpukura, a village in Bengal. They were very poor, pious and devotees of Sri Rama. As the father had refused to bear false witness in a case which would have benefited his neighbour, a powerful land owner, he had been despoiled of all his possessions. When he was sixty years of age, he went to Gaya on a pilgrimage. During the night, the lord appeared to him and said, "I am about to be reborn for the salvation of the world".

At the same time in Kamarapukura, his wife Chandramani also had a dream. There was a temple of Siva opposite her cottage. The idol quickened to life under her eyes and a ray of light penetrated into her being.

Chandramani fainted. Later she conceived and was transformed. She heard voices. She carried a God in her womb.

She gave birth to a male child on February 18, 1836. They named him Gadadhar. He was a boy full of fun, Mischievous and charming. He had a feminine grace. One day when he was six years old, he was going to the fields with a meal, which he carried in a fold of his garments. Something strange happened.

He was following a narrow path between the rice fields. As he munched his rice, he raised his eyes to the sky. He saw a great black cloud spreading rapidly. Suddenly at the edge of the cloud a flight of snow white cranes passed over his head.

The contrast was beautiful. His spirit wandered away. He lost consciousness and fell to the ground. The puffed rice was scattered somebody picked him up and carried him



home. A feeling of joy overcame him... This was the first time he was seized with ecstasy.

One day, when he was a child of eight years, he was playing the role of Siva in a play. Suddenly he was possessed by Siva Tears of joy rolled down his cheeks and he was transported. From then on the ecstasies became more frequent.

His father died when Ramakrishna was seven years old. So, it was difficult for the family to make both ends meet. The eldest son Ramkumar went to Calcutta and opened a School there. Though he sent for his brother to join the School, he refused to learn.

At that time a rich woman by name Rani Rasmani, who was regarded as belonging to an inferior caste, built a temple for Goddess Kali.

The temple was on the eastern bank of the Ganga at Dakshineswar. She could not find a Brahmin priest to officiate at the temple. The post was offered to Ramkumar.

At first, Ramkumar hesitated to accept the post of the priest, because the temple had been founded by a lady belonging to a lower caste.

Finally, he agreed. But Ramakrishna could reconcile himself to the idea only with great difficulty. Gradually his repugnance receded and when his brother died, Ramakrishna himself took over the post.



02

# THE TEMPLE OF KALI



In the temple of Kali, Ramakrishna played with the Goddess for ten long years. He lived in the temple alone with her. A number of pilgrims, Monks and Sadhus and both Hindus and Muslims visited the temple.

The Goddess, the Queen of the world, dwelt there clad in a Varanasi saree. In her two arms on the left, she held the severed head of a demon and a sword, with the right hands she offered boons, throwing an enchanting smile to the devotees.

She was the Universal Mother. The only reality for the young priest was that which he could see, hear and touch.

He was associated with all acts of worship during the day. He dressed her and offered her flowers and food. He was one of the attendants. When the queen rose and when she went to bed.

Within the temple she had enveloped him. He wept and used to cry out, "Mother, one more day has been wasted, I have not seen you, I have not understood the Truth".

He tore off his clothes, and even the sacred thread which no Brahmin would lay a side. All his actions in this regard became a subject for mockery, even for scandal; but he did not care for the criticisms.

The temple was a vast building with five domes. It was reached by an open terrace above the Ganga between a double row of twelve small domed temples to Siva. On the other side rose another vast temple to Krishna and Radha.

Ramakrishna says, "One day I was torn with intolerable anguish. My heart seemed to

be wrung like a wet cloth.... I was racked with pain. A sword was hanging in the sanctuary of Kali.

My eyes fell upon it. An idea flashed through my brain like a flash of lightening. The sword! It will help me to end my agony! I rushed up to it and seized it like a mad man... and lo! All the things around me vanished.

I saw an ocean of awareness, boundless, dazzling. In whatever direction I turned, great luminous waves were rising. They bore down upon me with a long roar, as if to swallow me. They broke over me and engulfed me. I was suffocated and lost consciousness and I fell... How I passed that day and the next I do not know; around me rolled an ineffable joy.

I was conscious of the presence of the "Divine Mother". He saw those around him through a drifting mist. He could no longer control his eyes, body or mind.

He prayed to the Mother to come to his help. Suddenly he understood that he was possessed by the Mother. He did not resist. She filled him. And out of the mists, the maternal form of the Mother emerged, first a hand, then her breath and her voice, finally her whole person.

One evening the rites were over for the day and the Mother was put to sleep. Ramakrishna could not sleep in his room. He listened. He heard her get up.

He saw her going to the upper storey of the temple with the joy of a young girl. As she walked, her wrinklets jingled. He wondered whether he was dreaming.

He went out into the court and raised his head. There he saw her with unbound hair on the balcony of the first floor, watching the Ganga flow through the beautiful night.

From that day his days and nights were passed in the presence of Goddess Kali.

Eventually he was identified with her. Through his body, as through a window, appeared the bodies of gods to the devotees.

One day Mathur Babu, the son-in-law of Rani Rasmani, was sitting in his room opposite Ramakrishna's. Unobserved, he watched him pacing up and down upon his balcony.

Suddenly, he uttered a cry, for he saw Ramakrishna alternately in the form of Siva as he walked in one direction and of the Mother as he walked in the opposite direction.

Some people laughed at his ecstasies and criticized him, too. He did not care. But Mathur Babu, his ally and protector, could not tolerate this. He requested Ramakrishna to keep his feelings under control and to follow the conventions of society.

He argued with Ramakrishna that even God followed rules of his own. He never made flowers of two different colours bloom on the same stalk.

Ramakrishna was puzzled and asked himself whether he had gone too far. The more he thought over Mathur's words, the more difficult it became to dismiss the doubt from his mind.

The following morning, he was gathering hibiscus flowers for his worship of Kali. Suddenly he saw two flowers, one blood red and one white, side by side on the same stem!





# SHARADA DEVI



Ramakrishna was sent back to Kamarpukura, as his well wishers thought he would recoup his health. His Mother thought that marriage would cure him of his divine enchantment. He did not object.

He was twenty-three years old. When efforts to find a bride appeared hopeless, he gave a clue to his Mother: "It is useless to search here and there. Go and look in the family of Ram Mukhopadhyaya of the village of Jayarambati".



Jayarambati is a small village in West Bengal. The family of the Mukherjis was well

known in the village as the worshippers of the Holy Mother.

Ramachandra, a worthy descendant of the Mukherjis, was respected for his godliness and compassion for all. He married Shyamasundari Devi, daughter of Haridas Muzumdar of Shihar. Truly their daughter Sharada Devi had been set-aside for a higher purpose. Ramakrishna's union with Sharada Devi was a mutual offering to God in the person of a spouse.

Ramakrishna was twenty-three years old and his bride Sharada Devi was about five. After the marriage she returned to her father's house and did not see him for eight long years.

Ramakrishna returned to his temple after regaining some measure of calm at his mother's house. Goddess Kali was waiting for him in the temple.

As he entered the temple the divine delirium was rekindled. His madness returned

tenfold. He could see creatures emerging from him. He remained motionless. Horror paralysed his limbs.

He was helpless. He appealed to the Mother. For the vision of Kali was the only hope of survival for him. This mental orgy and despair continued for two years.

Help came to Ramakrishna through a woman. One day when he was watching the boats moving on the Ganga, he saw a woman coming up the terrace on which he was standing.

She was tall, beautiful and wore the dress of a Sanyasini. Ramakrishna sent for her. As soon as she came she burst into tears and said, "My son, I have been waiting for you for a long time".

She was a Brahmin, a devotee of Vishnu. She belonged to a noble Bengali family. She was highly educated and learned in the Bhakti scriptures.

She said that she was looking for the man inspired by God. She said that she had a message for him. She did not reveal her name but was known as Bhairavi Brahmani.

A relationship of mother and son was established there and then between the woman and Ramakrishna. He told her all his experiences in God and how a few thought him mad, and asked her whether he was really mad.

Bhairavi comforted him with maternal tenderness. She told him that he had reached the highest state of sadhana (spiritual practice). His sufferings were only the measure of his ascent. She took care of him and enlightened his mind.

Bhairavi, his Guru, recognized in him the incarnation of Divinity. She held a meeting at Dakshineshwar with the Pandits and insisted that public recognition be given to this new Avatara.

Ramakrishna's fame began to spread and people from all walks of life came to seek instruction. He remained to the end of his life the simplest of men. He was too intoxicated with God to consider himself an Avatara. He disliked even the mention of the word 'Avatara'.



04

# REALIZATION OF GOD



Ramakrishna had achieved the realization of the personal God by 1864. Just then, the messenger of the impersonal God arrived at Dakshineshwar. This man was Totapuri (the naked man), a wandering monk.

For a long time Ramakrishna had been haunted by the formless God prowling round him. Ramakrishna who remained dissatisfied till he had seen and embraced the living form, wanted to sink body and soul in the Formless.

He could not escape it. One who was exploring the continent of the gods could not stop.

The formless God lay in wait for Ramakrishna, but Ramakrishna did not go to Him. Totapuri came to fetch Him.

Totapuri saw Ramakrishna sitting on one of the steps of the temple lost in the happiness of the vision. Struck by what he saw Totapuri said, "My son, I see that you have travelled far along the way of the Truth. If you wish it. I can help you. I will teach you Vedanta".

Ramakrishna told him that he had first to obtain the permission of the Mother. He got her permission and became an ardent disciple of Totapuri.

He had to submit to the test of 'initiation'. He had to renounce his sacred thread, priesthood and other privileges. They were nothing to him.

But he had to renounce his personal God now and for ever. He had to conduct his own funeral rites. Ramakrishna was clothed in the saffron robe of a Sanyasi and Totapuri began to teach him the virtues of Advaita Vedanta.

The naked man Totapuri taught him to detach his mind from all objects and to plunge

into the heart of the Atman. Though he could detach his mind from all objects, the familiar form of the Mother stood before him.

Every time he tried to concentrate on the precepts of Advaita Vedanta, the form of the Mother intervened. So he said to Totapuri in despair, "It is no good. I shall never succeed in lifting my spirit to the 'Unconditioned State'.

Totapuri took a piece of glass and struck the point between his eyes and said, "Concentrate your mind on that point". Ramakrishna says, "Then I began to meditate with all my might and as soon as the gracious form of the Mother appeared, I used my discrimination as a sword and I clove her in two.

The last barrier fell and I lost myself in "Samadhi".

Totapuri was amazed; because Ramakrishna had achieved in one day what had taken forty years for him. Totapuri had



intended to stay only for three days, but stayed for eleven months to have interaction with his disciple who had outstripped him.

In spite of his vast knowledge Totapuri could not realize that love could be one of the paths leading to God. He scorned prayers, hymns and religious dances.

When Ramakrishna began repeating the names Gods to the accompaniment of clapping of hands, he asked, "Are you making bread?"

But the charm began to work on Totapuri; for a few hymns sung melodiously brought tears to his eyes. Even his illness played a dominant role in his spirit realizing its limitations. His sickness grew virulent and the ascetic could not concentrate on Brahman. He went down to the Ganga to sacrifice himself. But an invisible force prevented him.

He came back dismayed. He had experienced the power of Maya. It existed everywhere in life, in death. He admitted to

Ramakrishna that Brahman and Shakthi are one and the same.

The Divine Mother was pacified and restored his health. He bade goodbye to his pupil who had become his Master and went his way, an enlightened man.

Ramakrishna summed up the experiences with Totapuri, "When I think of the Supreme Being as inactive, I call him Brahman and when I think of him as active I call him Maya or Shakthi. It is impossible to think of the one without the other. The Divine Mother and Brahman are one".

Ramakrishna recognized that all religions led by different paths to the same God. So, he was eager to explore all the paths.

Rani Rasmani had desired that rooms should be reserved for passing guests of all religions in her Foundation. From his temple Ramakrishna could see Muslim fakirs passing.

One day Ramakrishna saw a humble Muslim absorbed in prayers. He observed,

through the outward shell of his body, that through Islam, he had realized God.

He asked him to initiate him and for several days he forgot his Gods including Kali. Living outside the temple, he repeated the name of Allah, wearing the robes of a Muslim.

He was ready to eat forbidden food. Mathur Babu was aghast and begged him to desist. He had food prepared for Ramakrishna by a Brahmin. This total surrender resulted in his spiritual voyage and a radiant personage with grave countenance and white beard appeared to him. The river of Islam led him back to the ocean.

Seven years later, an experience of the same kind led him to realize Christianity.

In November 1874, one Mallik, a Hindu of Calcutta, with a garden near Dakshineswar, read the Bible to him. Ramakrishna heard of Christ for the first time.

The life of Jesus pervaded him. One day when he was sitting in the room of a rich

Hindu, he saw on the wall, a picture representing the Madonna (virgin Mary) and the child (Jesus Christ). Then the figures came to life.

The holy visions came close and entered him. He had no room for anything but Christ. He no longer thought of going to the temple.

One afternoon, in the grove of Dakshineswar, he saw a person coming towards him. He drew near and Ramakrishna heard in the depths of his soul the words, "Behold the Christ. It is He, the maser Yogi. It is Jesus, Love Incarnate".

The son of Man embraced the Seer of India, the son of the Mother, and absorbed him into himself. Ramakrishna was lost in ecstasy. Once again he realized the union with Brahman.

The river of Christianity led him back to the ocean. Ramakrishna considered Christ also as an incarnation.

Knowledge does not consist in the number of books one has read. Ramakrishna gained his knowledge through interaction with thousands of Monks, Pilgrims and Pandits.

He could say to his disciples, "All religions lead to the same God. A river has several ghats. At one a Hindu draws water and calls it 'jal'; at another a Muslim draws water and calls it 'pani'; at another ghat a Christian calls it water. The substance is the same, under different names. A man should follow his own path sincerely and ardently to know God. He will surely realize Him".

Ramakrishna was the loving brother of everything that lives and dies. He could not be satisfied with happiness, which he could not share with others. As the Mother drew him to herself he prayed "O, Mother, let me remain in contact with men. Do not make me a dried up ascetic".



05

# **SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S PATH**



In May 1867, after the crises he had passed through, Sri Ramakrishna left for Kamarpukura. After an absence of eight years he was going there to have rest for six or seven months. The good people of the village gave him a warm welcome. They were happy at the sight of their Gadadhar.

His wife Sharada Devi was fourteen years old now. She came to Kamarpukura on learning about his arrival. She had evolved spiritually so far that she could understand her husband's mission.

She knew the part she had to play in his life. She recognized him as her guide and put herself at his service.

It was revealed to Ramakrishna about 1863, that many faithful and pure hearted persons would come to him. The time was ripe.

He could wait no longer. Night and day, the thought of the beloved companions possessed him. He cried in His heart. He went to the roof in the fading light and cried out; "Come, my children, where are you? I cannot live without you"....

They arrived one after the other. A write-up in a journal of Brahmo Samaj attracted Ramachandra Dutt and Manmohan Mitra. They came and were conquered. They brought him his two greatest disciples. The one who became the abbot of the Ramakrishna order, Brahmananda, and he whose genius was to enlighten India and the world, Vivekananda.

According to Sharadananda, all the disciples of Ramakrishna arrived before the end of 1884. Ramakrishna did nothing to detach them from the world but captivated them by his charm and his character.

People belonging to all classes and castes came to him. He spoke to all with patience. He would spend twenty out of the twenty-four hours of the day answering the disciples.

He won their hearts. But he wanted every man to understand, sympathise with, and love the rest of mankind. He wanted every man to identify himself with the life of humanity.

He felt that it was unnecessary to seek God only in temples because he was here, every where, every second. We can see him, we can touch him, for he is our brother, our friend, and our enemy.

He warned his disciples against any kind of 'Ramakrishnaism' that is, regarding him as an 'Avatar' and starting a sect. Above all there must be no barriers. "A river has no need of barriers. If it dams itself up, it stagnates and becomes foul".





# RAMAKRISHNA AS A WONDERFUL WAND

06



Ramakrishna was a wonderful wand in the hands of the Mother. Towards the end of his life such was his horror of riches that he could not touch gold without being burnt.

Once when Ramakrishna lay down on his bed he felt acute pain, as if a scorpion had stung him. He got up and looked for the scorpion.

What he found was not a scorpion but an eight-anna coin ! His body could not bear even the presence of a coin under the covers !

Vivekananda relates, "Even when he was sleeping, if I touched him with a piece of money, his hand would bend and his whole body would seem to be paralysed.

The touch of an impure person gave him physical pain and he compared it to the bite of a cobra. He could read the souls of those who approached him and, if he accepted them as his disciples, it was with the full knowledge of their nature.

Ramakrishna did not ask his disciples to forsake everything. To those who had already bound themselves with family ties, he did not say, 'Forsake all to seek salvation'.

He would say, "We owe a debt to the gods, we owe a debt to parents, we owe a debt to our wives. No work can be satisfactorily concluded until the debt to the parents at least has been paid. So long as parents remain in want, the practice of devotion avails nothing".

One day in the course of a lecture Keshab said. "O, God, grant that we may be plunged in the river of devotin and attain the ocean of Sachidananda". There were women sitting behind a screen.

Though Sri Ramakrishna has been blamed by some people for sacrificing her, she never showed any trace of resentment. "I have learnt," he said to her, 'to look upon every woman as Mother. That is the only way I can think of you. But if you wish to draw me into this world (of illusion) as I have been married to you, I am at your service'.

She renounced worldly pleasures and encouraged him in his mission. Touched by her innocence and self-sacrifice, Ramakrishna played the part of her elder brother. He devoted himself to her education as a diligent wife and good manager.

Ramakrishna recognized the Goddess under her veil. One night, when everything had been prepared for worship, he made Sharada Devi sit in the seat of Kali and, as priest, worshipped her. Both of them were in a condition of ecstasy. When he came to himself he called her the Divine Mother.

Ramakrishna's worship of womanhood had no limitations. He recognized the Mother even in the most degraded prostitutes.

At the end of 1867, Sri Ramakrishna returned to Dakshineswar and made several Pilgrimages with Mathur Babu, the Patron of the temple.

During these Pilgrimages, he came face to face with poverty and suffering. Till then he had lived in a hypnotic trance. Mother Kali had spread a veil over him and had hidden human suffering from him.

When they arrived at Deoghar he saw the ravages made by the terrible famine. He saw the Santhals emaciated and dying of hunger.

He told Mathur Babu that they must feed those Santhals. Mathur Babu told him that he was not so rich as to undertake such a task. Ramakrishna sat down among the poor and wept.

During the summer of 1870, Mathur Babu took him to one of his estates. It was the time of payment of dues. The harvest had failed

and the tenants could not pay. Ramakrishna asked Mathur Babu to condone their dues but Mathur Babu protested.

Ramakrishna said, "You are only the steward of the Mother. They are the Mother's tenants. You must spend the Mother's money.

When they are suffering, how can you refuse to help them? You must do so." Mathur Babu had to give in.

In the temple Ramakrishna had the opportunity of talking to the faithful of all religions and sects. As the Bhairavi Brahmani had announced that Ramakrishna was an incarnation of God, people came from all parts of the country to see him. So, he saw many great personalities.

Among them were Michael Madhusudan Dutt, a Bengali Poet, a convert to Christianity, Narayana Shastri and Padmanabhan, masters of Vedantic learning. Vishwanath Upadhyaya and Maharshi

Dayananda Saraswathi, the founder of Arya Samaj, Maharshi Debendranath Tagore and Keshab Chunder Sen, head of the Brahmo Samaj.

Ramakrishna's meeting with members of the Brahmo Samaj brought him into contact with the educated middle class of our country.

Through them he came to know the pioneers of progress and western ideas about which he knew nothing.

He was not a strict and narrow devotee who would pull down the shutters of his cell. He flung them wide open. He was human, curious and eager for the fruits of the tree of life. In order to understand things better, he identified himself with them. He saw that the God within him could not be satisfied with his personal satisfaction.

He required of him the love and service of mankind. His spiritual struggles, ecstasies and realizations were meant to prepare the way for the development of mankind.

Sri Ramakrishna pointed to them and said to Keshab, "If you are all plunged at once, what will be their fate? So, you must come out of the water from time to time, then go back; immerse yourself and come out alternately!" Everyone laughed heartily.

Ramakrishna's inner eye penetrated into the problems of his children. He could guide the troubled souls. This becomes clear in the story of the comedian, Girish Chandra Ghosh.

At their first meeting Ghosh was drunk and he insulted Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna calmly said to him, "At least you might drink to God. He drinks as well".

The drunkard, stunned, asked, "How do you know"? Ramakrishna answered, "If he did not drink, how could he have created this topsy-turvy world"?

Girish remained in bewildered silence. After he left, Ramakrishna told his disciples that Girish was a great devotee of God. Later Girish,

became a disciple of Ramakrishna and gave up drinking, though his master did not ask him to.

With his religious sensitiveness, Ramakrishna could identify those who were predestined to a divine sowing, those in whom God was sleeping. He scrutinized his disciples thoroughly. His true disciples were to be leaders and have charge of other souls.

He preferred his disciples to be young and unmarried. He was their companion, brother and guide. The advice he gave was not his own.

It came from Mother Kali. He did not hinder their development by putting himself between the pupil and his learning. He was afraid of being loved too dearly. He did not want to be bound by the tenderness of his pupils.

“Let the bees suck your heart, but be careful that the beauty of your heart does not keep one of them captive”.



Ramakrishna believed that God is in everything and God is everything. So, it follows that who ever opens his eyes and looks around will end up by meeting Him.

Ramakrishna also practiced and preached 'Ahimsa', not only with regard to man but to all living creatures.

A parable is given here to drive home the point that God is everywhere and in everything and that at times we should use our discretion in coming to a conclusion.

One day a holy man in a forest taught his disciples that God is in everything. One of the disciples had gone to the forest to collect wood for sacrificial fire.

He heard a cry "A tusker is approaching". He did not move a way to save himself, though others fled from the scene. The man said, "The elephant is God in one form, why should I run away?" Even when the

elephant driver yelled, "Save yourself", he did not move.

The elephant lifted him and flung him aside. He was badly bruised. A little later he was asked, "Why did you not run away to save yourself"? He replied, "My master has taught me that God is in everything.

So, I thought of God in the elephant and stayed there". They asked him, "Why didn't you think there was God in the elephant driver? Why didn't you pay attention to his words?



## THE GREAT DISCIPLE



Ramakrishna's life would not have been complete without the association with Narendranath Dutta, who later came to be known as Swami Vivekananda.

Narendra relates, "From my youth every night just as I fell asleep, two dreams took shape. In one I saw myself among the great ones of the earth, the possessor of riches, honour, power, and glory; and I felt that the capacity to attain all these was in me.

But the next instant I saw myself renouncing all worldly things, dressed in a simple loincloth, living on alms, sleeping at the foot of a tree; and I thought I was capable of living thus, like the rishis of old.

Of these two pictures, the second took the upper hand and I felt that only thus could a man attain supreme bliss..... And each night it was renewed”.

Such was Narendra when he first went to meet the master. Ramakrishna treated Naren in an exceptional way. He had chosen him at the first glance, on account of what he was and what he might become, a spiritual leader of mankind.

At their first meeting Ramakrishna took Naren's hand in his and said. "Promise me that you will come to see me again alone and soon!" Naren promised in order to free himself from the saint, but decided never to return.

But the strange vision worked on him and within a month he returned to Dakshineswar. During his second visit Naren found Ramakrishna sitting on his small bed.

Ramakrishna affectionately called Naren to sit by his side on the bed. Naren thought that he was going to make some eccentric remark.

But before he could stop him, Ramakrishna placed his right foot on his body. The contact was terrible.

With his eyes open he saw the walls and everything in the room Vanishing into nothingness. He felt as though the whole universe and his individuality were lost in the nameless void.

He was terrified and feared that he was face to face with death. He cried out, "What are you doing? I have parents at home". Then Sri Ramakrishna began to laugh, "All right, let us leave it at that for the moment".

As soon as Sri Ramakrishna said these words, the strange phenomenon ended. Naren came to himself again and everything both within and without was as before.

At his third visit, Naren was on the defensive, Sri Ramakrishna took him to the garden and after a short stroll they sat in the parlour.

The master fell into a trance and, as Narendra watched, he was suddenly touched by the master. Narendra immediately lost all consciousness of the world outside. When he came to himself a little later, he saw Sri Ramakrishna looking at him and stroking his chest.

Naren did not want to be a disciple of anyone. His reason would not submit to domination. He wanted to retain his independence and did not want to accept anything from the master.

The uncritical faith of others roused his contempt. Naren questioned everything. He alone weighed Sri Ramakrishna's words. He alone doubted.

Sri Ramakrishna loved him the better for it. Naren said to Sri Ramakrishna, "Even if millions of people called you God, if I had not proved it for myself, I would never do so".

Though Naren's knowledge gave him intense joy, his severe criticism which had no consideration for others hurt the master.

Naren would say, "How do you know that your realizations are not the creations of your sick brain"?

At such times, Sri Ramakrishna would seek comfort of the Mother, who consoled him with the words, "patience, son, Naren's eyes will be opened".

It was impossible to satisfy Naren with proof of God's existence. He maintained, "If God is real, it is possible to realize Him".

The master's spirit gradually took possession of the rebel disciple. Naren did not let go even a single opportunity to ridicule his master's beliefs. One day Naren and other disciples and went into side-splitting laughter at the extravagance of Advaitist Vedanta.

They said, "This jug is God... and theses flies are God". Sri Ramakrishna heard the

laughter from the adjoining room and came in quietly in a semi-conscious state and touched Naren.

Again a spiritual tornado swept through him. All at once everything was changed in Naren's eyes. He saw with amazement that nothing existed but God, He went back to his house; all that he saw, touched and was God.

He stopped doing anything, intoxicated by the universal power. He remained in this condition for some days. Then the trance vanished. But its remembrance remained with Naren. He repeated 'Shiva, Shiva' like a mad man.

In 1884, Naren's prodigal father died. The family was facing ruin. From then on Naren tasted misery. He was facing the realities of life for the first time.

Throughout this tortuous period Naren continued to pray God every morning. One



day his mother said, to him, "Fool, be quiet, what has your God done for you"?...

He in his turn was filled with anger against God. Why did He not answer his anguished appeals? Why did He allow so much suffering on the earth?

He declared war upon God. Now, he openly spoke against God. He told a few disciples of Sri Ramakrishna who remonstrated against his sayings, that only a coward believed in God through fear.

One evening when he had eaten nothing, he sank down, exhausted and wet, in front of a house by the roadside. The delirium of fever raged in his body.

Suddenly it seemed as if the folds enveloping his soul were rent asunder and there was light. All his past doubts were automatically solved. He could say truly, "I see, I know, I believe, I am undeceived".

On that day, Sri Ramakrishna came to Calcutta and begged Naren to go with him to Dakshineswar. Naren tried to escape, but in vain; he was obliged to follow the master. That night, shut up in his room Sri Ramakrishna said to him, "I know that you cannot remain in the world. But for my sake, stay in it as long as I live".



# RAMAKRISHNA'S GREAT PATH

08



Sri Ramakrishna lived at Dakshineswar from 1881 onwards surrounded by his disciples. Pilgrims, worshippers, pandits and religious and curious men thronged the place to overwhelm the master with their questions. He always answered them with patience. He could play both the child and the judge.

He would say, "Too much concentration on ceremonial purity becomes a plague. People affected with this disease have no time to think of man or God".

"It is the sanctity of men that makes the sanctity of places. Otherwise how can places purify a man"?

“God is everywhere. God is in us. Life and the universe are his dreams”.

“The eyes”, he said, “are the windows of the soul”. He read through them at the first glance.

The master forgave everything, for he believed in infinite kindness. He said, “Do not speak of love for your brother. Realise it. Do not argue about doctrine and religion.

There is only one. All rivers flow to the Ocean. Flow and let others flow too! The great stream makes a path for itself according to the scope of its journey.

But it is all the same water.....  
Go..... Flow on towards the ocean.....”

Ramakrishna's end was approaching. His feeble body was gradually consumed by the fire of ecstasy. It was worn-out by his continuous contact with those who came to seek his advice. In his humorous way he said to Goddess Kali. “Why do you bring hither all

these people, who are like milk diluted with five times its own quantity of water? My eyes are destroyed blowing the fire to get rid of the water.

My health is gone. Do it yourself, if you want it done. This (pointing to his body) is nothing but a burst drum and if you go on beating it day in and day out, how long do you think it will last?

But he never turned away any one. He said, "Let me be condemned to be born over again, even in the form of a dog, if so I can be of help to a single soul".

And again, "I will give up twenty thousand such bodies to help one man. It is glorious to help even one man".

In 1884, Ramakrishna's health took a serious turn. The doctors who examined him forbade both speech and ecstasy. But he did not pay attention to them. Finally, when the disease was diagnosed as throat cancer, he was put

under the care of Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar of Calcutta.

He was a rationalist, who did not agree with Ramakrishna's religious views. But, gradually he was attracted towards Ramakrishna and treated him free.

He said to Sri Ramakrishna, I love you so dearly because of your devotion to truth.

Ramakrishna's condition grew worse. Dr. Sarkar advised that Ramakrishna be removed to the country. In December 1885, he was taken to a house in the midst of the beautiful gardens of cossipore.

His disciples begged him to pray with them for his health. A Pandit, who shared their faith, joined them in their entreaties. The Pandit said to Sri Ramakrishna, "The scriptures declare that saints like you can cure, themselves by an effort of the will".

Sri Ramakrishna replied, "My mind has been given to God once and for all. Would you have me ask for it back"?

They begged him to pray to Mother Kali. He replied, "I will try what I can do".

They left him alone for a few hours. When they returned the Master said, "I said to her, 'Mother, I cannot eat because of suffering. Make it possible for me to eat a little'".

She pointed to you all and said, "What! Are you not eating through all these mouths? I was ashamed and could not utter another word".

Sri Ramakrishna ordered his disciples to beg for their food without distinction of caste, to prepare them for a monastic life.

Towards the end of March, he gave them saffron robes and some kind of monastic initiation.

He did not hide the fact that he regarded Naren as his heir. He said to him one day, "I leave these young people in your charge. Busy yourself in developing their spirituality".

One day, while meditating, Naren had the sensation of a light shining behind his head. Suddenly he lost consciousness and was lost in the Absolute.

He had fallen into the depths of 'Nirvikalpa Samadhi', which he had sought for so long and which Ramakrishna had refused to allow him.

When Naren came down to the earth, he approached his Master who said, "Now the Mother has shown you everything. But this revelation will remain under lock and key, and I shall keep the key. When you have accomplished the mother's work, you will find this treasure again.

Three or four days before his death, he called Naren and asked to be left alone with him. He looked at him and passed into an ecstasy. It enveloped Naren. When he came back from his shadows, he saw Shri Ramakrishna in tears. The master said to him,



“Today I have given you my all and am now only a fakir, possessing nothing. By this power you will do immense good in the world”.

From that moment all his powers were transferred to Naren, the master and the disciple were one.

Sunday August 15, 1886..... The last day.

In the afternoon, Shri Ramakrishna walked a little and talked with his disciples for two hours. At night fall he became unconscious.

But by midnight he revived, leaning against five or six pillows he talked to the last moment with Naren.

Then in ringing tones he cried out the name of his beloved Kali, the Divine Mother, and lay back. After half an hour of this final ecstasy, he died. In his own words of faith, “he had passed from one room to another”.

His disciples bid farewell with the words,  
“Victory to Bhagawan Ramakrishna”.

The holy body was consigned to a sacred  
fire at the cremation ground on the Ganga.  
When all was over, the ashes were gathered in  
a copper vessel and placed on the Master’s bed.

In the evening Sharada Devi sat down  
to remove her ornaments one by one. When  
she was about to take off her gold bracelets, the  
Master suddenly appeared as he was before he  
took ill; and taking hold of her hands he said,  
“Am I dead that you are removing the signs of  
a married woman from your wrists”? She then  
desisted from doing so.



# THE GOD- REALIZATION



Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa had virtually no education. But he was one of the great teachers of India. He could express his teachings simply and clearly.

He used very apt comparisons. Some one asked him, is sin true or false? Does it exist in God? Ramakrishna answered, "It exists in God as poison exists in a serpent.

It is poison, it is harmful to us, not to God". He taught that religious books, discussion and discourses are needed only till a man realizes God, but once God-realization is achieved, they fall silent.

He gave an analogy. The bee keeps buzzing until it begins to suck honey from the

flower; once the sucking begins, the buzz stops. Sri Ramakrishna also narrated memorable Parables. (A parable is a story with a moral.)

Once he was saying that a man living in society should resist evil and defend himself. Goodness does not mean suffering evil silently.

He narrated the story of a highly poisonous serpent in a field, where boys grazed their cattle. They were terribly afraid of the serpent.

Once a holy man passed that way. The boys warned him against the serpent. He told them that he would soften it with mantras.

When it approached him with its hood raised, he murmured a charm, and it fell at his feet. He asked it not to harm any one and to meditate on God.

The serpent became very pious. The boys found it passive, and began to throw stones at it and torment it. On his way back the holy man saw the serpent.

He asked it why it had become so weak. It narrated how it became totally passive, and suffered in consequence. The holy man said, "I forbade you to bite God's creatures. But why did you not raise your hood and hiss, when people harassed you"?

He narrated another story to drive home a point. One day some fishermen were catching fish. An eagle swooped down, caught a fish and flew away.

A number of crows were flying about. They chased the eagle for the sake of the fish. The eagle flew to the south, the crows pursued it.

It flew to the north, it flew to the west, then to the east, but the crows came in pursuit. Confounded, it flew this way and that and, in its panic, dropped the fish.

The crows now ignored the eagle and went after the fish. The eagle sat on a branch

and said to itself, 'The wretched fish was the cause of my misery. I let it go, and am now happy'.

Sri Ramakrishna explained; Desire is the root cause of all misery. A man wants power, wants money, wants this and that. If he lets go desire, happiness comes of its own accord. Give up desire and be compassionate, taught Sri Ramakrishna.

Ramakrishna's story of a doll made of salt is famous. Once somebody asked, "If you have seen God, why don't you describe him"?

Ramakrishna answered, "Once a doll made of salt set out to measure the depth of the sea. Its object was to narrate its experience to people when it returned.

But no sooner had it left the shore and stepped into the sea than it melted and disappeared. No one could tell what had happened to it.

The attempt of any man to describe his experience of the realization of God is similar to the doll's attempt. He forgets himself in that experience and can say nothing".

Once the image of Radhakrishna fell down because of the carelessness of the priest and the leg was broken. Learned men conversant with the sastras said that, according to the sastras, a flawed image was not to be worshipped but to be thrown away.

But Rasmani did not like the idea of discarding the image, which had been worshipped for years. When she requested Ramakrishna to guide her, he said, "If your son-in-law happens to break his leg will you throw him away? The image can be repaired and used".

Sri Ramakrishna's teaching was simple. A man need not renounce family life and become a sanyasi. Family life is a fortress. It is

easier to overcome a foe from within the fortress than from outside.

To attain salvation one has to give up the 'I'. The object of human life is God realization. 'Bhakti' (devotion) and 'Jnana' (knowledge) lead to the same goal. But in our age 'Bhakti' is to be preferred. To realize God, he said, love God. Become the Mother's child.

Cry out to her with all sincerity, and she will respond. A mother attends to her household duties, but when the child cries, gives up her work and hastens to the child.

So it is with man, too. If he cries out sincerely to God or the Mother, God or the Mother will hasten to him.

The object of human life is to see God. Man need not go in search of God. God is near by. God is every where. But you have to make the necessary effort to see him.



There is butter in milk. But you have to make the necessary effort to get the butter. Surrender everything to Him. Pray, pray sincerely. Debates on whether God has form or is formless are not only useless but unnecessary.

He has form, He is also formless. You need the right Guru to reveal your true nature to you, to rescue you from ignorance. So Ramakrishna Paramahansa taught. And if any one asked, 'Have you seen God'? He could honestly say, 'Yes, I have seen Him. And I can enable you, too, to see him if you are prepared to make the effort.

Ramakrishna could also honestly say. 'All religions lead to the same goal'. This was not



just a matter of belief. He had practised the teachings of every major religion, got them into his blood and bones, and realized God through each of them.

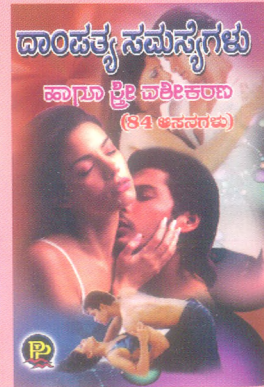
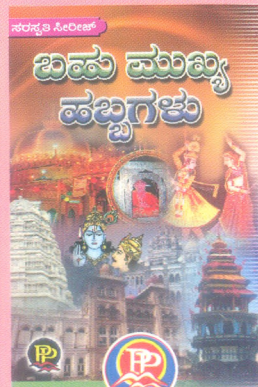
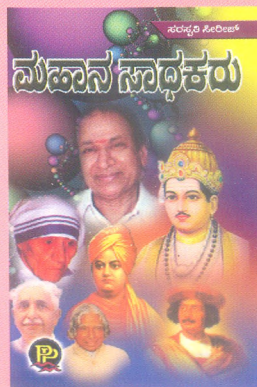
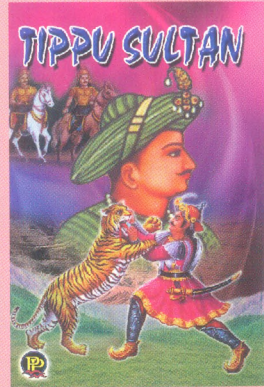
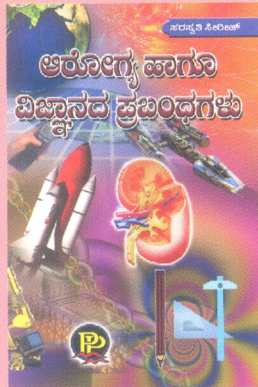
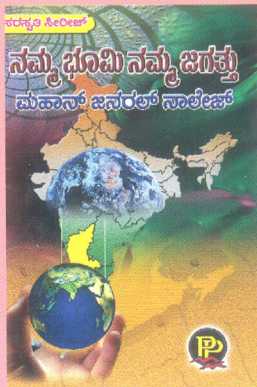
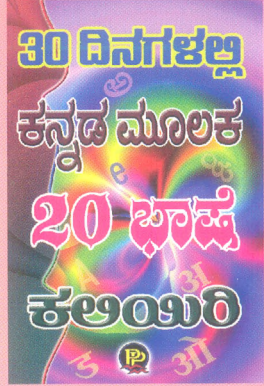
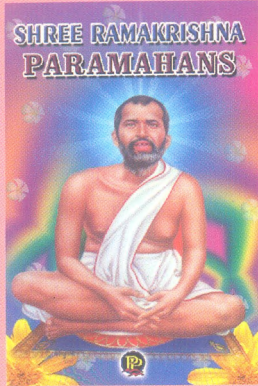
He had worshipped Mother Kali; and he had equalled his master Totapuri in the realization of Brahman through Advaita.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa's greatest offering to India was Swami Vivekananda. Only a great teacher could mould a great disciple.

Vivekananda, as Narendranatha, began with disbelief and ridicule. But Vivekananda became a fervent disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and a light unto generations to come.







**ಹಾರು ಪ್ರಕಾಶನ, ಗದಗ**